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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000369

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; USPACOM FOR FPA
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [KHIV](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [NGO](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA WELCOMES PRESIDENT'S EMERGENCY AIDS PLAN

REF: A. STATE 3830

[1](#)B. RANGOON 295

Classified By: COM Carmen M. Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Burma is interested in new program possibilities under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (ref A) and has requested further consultations with the Embassy and USAID Bangkok to examine details of what the emergency plan actually means for Burma. Probably for reasons of control, the GOB says it is worried that the new plan could lead to an unmanageable and counterproductive plethora of NGOs in Burma. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) COM and Poloff met on March 18 with MOFA Political Director General U Thaung Tun to discuss our letter delivered February 26 (reftel B) on the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. According to Thaung Tun, the GOB welcomes the President's new plan and applauds the U.S. fight against HIV/AIDS on a global scale. He added that Burma would like more details on how the plan will work, and requested that the Embassy and USAID in Bangkok discuss specifics with the Ministry of Health in the near future at the Director General or Deputy Director General level. Discussions should include clarification on the plan's time frame, funding, and the geographical area to be covered.

[1](#)3. (C) The DG evidenced concern about the plan causing an increase in the number of NGOs in Burma. He said too many NGOs working the problem would be counter productive, and iterated that any new NGOs would have to arrange MOUs individually with the appropriate ministry before operating in Burma. The COM pointed out that the President's Emergency Plan will likely use existing mechanisms (currently supporting four NGOs) for any new funds, including U.S. contributions to the Global Fund and to UN agencies that address HIV/AIDS in Burma.

[1](#)4. (C) The COM raised the need for the GOB to allow NGOs to conduct HIV testing, pointing out that 20 percent of NGO clients never come back for test results or post-test counseling due to a one-week wait imposed by government testing labs. Exchange rates also need to be rationalized for the international agencies and NGOs. The present official exchange rate of Kyat 450 to \$1 is far more expensive to NGOs and international agencies than the going street rate of Kyat 850 to \$1 -- not to mention the programming difficulties this artificial rate causes.

[1](#)5. (C) COMMENT: The GOB seems to be quite interested in the plan's new funding possibilities to fight HIV/AIDS over the next several years. The decision to invite the COM in to discuss the plan was made at least at the Foreign Minister level. The leadership is also likely concerned about controlling a mass of new NGOs descending on Burma to fight HIV/AIDS. We will request USAID Bangkok to assist us in going over the plan's implications with the Ministry of Health. END COMMENT.

Martinez